

NAS report December 7, 2017

Writing system is slowly being implemented. There is still resistance, which is both understandable and also not understandable. Understandable due to our history and the methods utilized to teach the Blackfoot language over the past century. Not understandable in that the I, the BNAS director, has made it clear that this is the direction we are going and that there is a clear need for uniformity in writing so that students receive consistent input from grades k-12 (and after; BCC has adopted the writing system I am implementing).

The pre-tests for the High school are completed with highly disappointing results. The students who were tested will be given a post-test (it will be the exact same test with phrases and words the instructor sent emailed to me that is part of their curriculum) starting in March. It is important to note that I was unable to test all students due to various issues that can be discussed with the board and I. this does not cause any problems because the students were chosen at random and provide an excellent populating of random sampling. A copy of the test is attached. Further, it is my professional statement that this test is easy and ought to have students passing at a higher level than the results we see. I would ask students to say the 93 words in Blackfeet (I say 'fox' and they must reply with [sinnōpǎ]). I went through the target words I would then say the remaining words they did not produce in Blackfoot and see if they recognized the word (I say [imitāa] and they say 'Dog'). For the percentages I subtracted the amount they got correct and divided their correct responses by the remaining number. So, out of 93 words, lets say they got 13 correct then I would say the remaining 80 words and if they were able to translate 8 of them then that means they were cognitive with 10% of the remaining input. I did it this way in an attempt to have consistency, if a student was able to produce 30 words and was able to translate ten then I feel as if their cognitive percentage ought to be higher than a student who produced 3 words and was cognitive with 11 words. The totals were out of 25 students the average percentage of correct word productions is 14%, the highest being 50% (still a failing grade by any standards) with a low of 1%, a medium of 11% with. Cognition average was 10%, with a high of 46%, a low of 1%, and a medium of 8%. In addition at the end of the test I chose a set of words that I would say and have the students say after me, words were chosen because they have the Blackfoot sounds and, from my professional opinion, are words novice speakers ought to be able to say. They were [iitāak"tsō'•p'] 'casino,' [iss•sksskāatūkiit'] 'think clearly,' [āikksikǎ] 'eclipse,' ['pippoō•toōtsǫ'] 'things we were given through creation,' [kǎ•āa"sinnoōn] 'our grandparent,' [miistǎpp"toōt'] 'put it away,' [isstsiipāattūpiiyō'•p'] 'source of life,' [iitai•nnikyō'•p'] 'Friday,' [nīitsīpō'•"sin] 'Blackfoot Language,' and [kittsiitsoōwǎ•piittūpii] 'you are a wonderful person.' The common mishaps in annunciation where: turning the aspirate tone into an [sh] sound, not producing the slipping [ks] and [ts] sounds, turning the guttural tone into a [k] or [s] sound or eliminating it completely. Turning the [ts] into a [da] sound. Further, duyring the cognitive portions of the test the students consistently misinterpreted 'go away' as 'hurry up.' Importantly, upon hearing the word for water [ō"kie] the students thought I was saying [ōkie] 'hello.' This is not because I am a second language speaker but because the guttural tone (and I assume the aspirate tone) are arbitrary sounds to their ears in that they don't convey meaning as much as they are mysterious sounds that come and go in the language with no logic or reason. It is also paramount to add that I do not believe me dialect or second language speaking situation has any effect on these results. These results are concerning as our High School students ought to have more ability within the Blackfoot Language and we are spending a

lot of monies into revitalizing the language with no meaningful results. It is also important to note that I did not have students attempt to read the writing system because this is the first year of its implementation and instructors are still learning it, nevertheless, next year I will add it as I have made it clear to our language instructors that this **is the direction we must go**.

After spending time wondering and observing various classes in all buildings I also find the need to utilize the talents of our instructors in better ways by placing them in different buildings/grade levels. I wouldn't make any movements this school year but I find it paramount to put this into discussion now so that the board and superintendent know where my thinking and professional assessments are directed. Who and what I feel needs to change can be discussed.

I have compiled another list titled "people" which has 103 names of various peoples including tribes and spirit beings. The list is attached.

Lastly, there is a request for professional development within the writing system I am implementing. The professional developer would be Mr. William Big Bull, the creator of the said writing system. He is a fluent speaker from Northern Piikuni. It would be healthy for our class 7 instructors to have a fluent speaker explain to them the importance of writing. Proper paper work is pending, I was going to have this paper work earlier but due to family circumstances I was unable to perform any duties (still having trouble). However, I remain positive about this work and must stay on path. Thank you